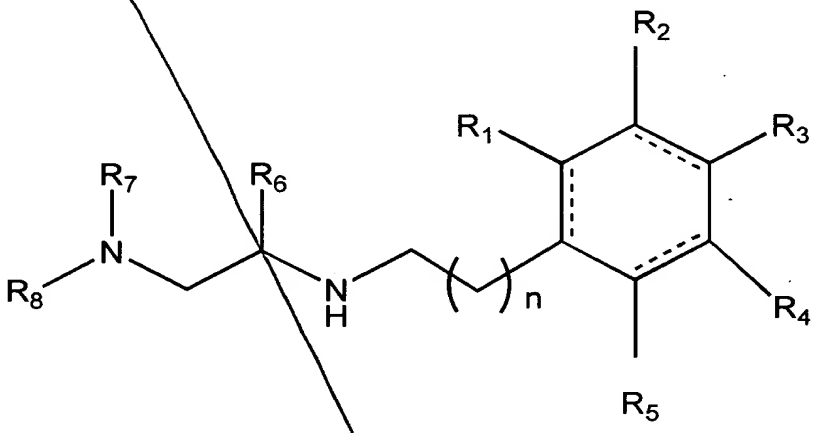
We claim:

1. A compound of the formula:



wherein:

the dotted lines indicate that the depicted ring is selected from the group consisting of phenyl and cyclohexyl;

n is 0, 1 or 2;

R_1 to R_5 are, independently, selected from the group consisting of a hydrogen atom, halo, hydroxy, protected hydroxy, nitro, C_1 to C_6 alkyl, C_1 to C_6 substituted alkyl, C_7 to C_{12} phenylalkyl, C_7 to C_{12} substituted phenylalkyl, C_3 to C_7 cycloalkyl, C_3 to C_7 substituted cycloalkyl, C_5 to C_7 cycloalkenyl, C_5 to C_7 substituted cycloalkenyl, phenyl, substituted phenyl, naphthyl, substituted naphthyl, C_1 to C_6 alkoxy, C_1 to C_6 substituted alkoxy, phenoxy, substituted phenoxy, C_1 to C_6 alkylthio, C_1 to C_6 substituted alkylthio, C_1 to C_6 alkylsulfonyl, C_1 to C_6 substituted alkylsulfonyl, phenylthio, substituted phenylthio, phenylsulfonyl, substituted phenylsulfonyl,

amino, protected amino, (monosubstituted)amino, protected (monosubstituted)amino and (disubstituted)amino; and when any one of adjacent position pairs R_1 and R_2, R_2 and R_3, and R_3 and R_4 and R_4 and R_5 together form a moiety selected from the group consisting of phenyl, substituted phenyl, heterocycle and substituted heterocycle, said moiety fused to the phenyl ring depicted in the above formula such that a bicyclic ring results;

R_6 is selected from the group consisting of a hydrogen atom, C_1 to C_6 alkyl, C_1 to C_6 substituted alkyl, C_7 to C_{12} phenylalkyl, C_7 to C_{12} substituted phenylalkyl, C_{11} to C_{16} naphthylalkyl and C_{11} to C_{16} substituted naphthylalkyl;

where R_7 is absent, R_8 together with the attached nitrogen depicted in the above formula form a substituted heterocycle or a substituted cyclic C_3 to C_7 heteroalkylene, wherein at least one of said substitution is the formula -D-E, wherein D may be absent or present and, if present, is selected from the group consisting of C_1 to C_6 alkylene and C_1 to C_6 substituted alkylene; and E is selected from the group consisting of amino, protected amino, (monosubstituted)amino, protected (monosubstituted)amino and (disubstituted)amino group; and

where R_7 is selected from the group consisting of a hydrogen atom, C_1 to C_6 alkyl and C_1 to C_6 substituted alkyl, R_8 is the formula X-CH-Y, wherein the attached nitrogen depicted in the above formula is attached to the carbon atom of the formula X-CH-Y, and wherein X is selected from the group consisting of a hydrogen atom, C_1 to C_6 alkyl, C_1 to C_6 substituted alkyl, C_7 to C_{12} phenylalkyl, C_7 to C_{12} substituted phenylalkyl, phenyl,

substituted phenyl, naphthyl and substituted naphthyl, and Y is the formula $-(CH_2)_n-Z$, wherein n is 1 to 6 and Z is selected from the group consisting of amino, protected amino, (monosubstituted)amino, protected (monosubstituted)amino and (disubstituted)amino; or

a pharmaceutically-acceptable salt thereof.

2. The compound of claim 1, wherein, when the depicted ring is phenyl, R_1 to R_5 and R_7 are each hydrogen and R_8 is the formula X-CH-Y, X is benzyl and Y is $-CH_2$-amino, R_6 is not benzyl.

3. The compound of claim 1, wherein, when the depicted ring is phenyl, at least one of R_1 to R_5 is not hydrogen.

4. The compound of claim 1, wherein, when the depicted ring is phenyl, R_6 is not benzyl.

5. The compound of claim 1, wherein the depicted ring is phenyl.

6. The compound of claim 1, wherein the depicted ring is cyclohexyl.

7. The compound of claim 1, wherein n is 1.

8. The compound of claim 1, wherein R_1 to R_5 are, independently, selected from the group consisting of a hydrogen atom, halo, hydroxy, protected hydroxy, nitro, C_1 to C_6 alkyl, C_1 to C_6 substituted alkyl, phenyl, substituted phenyl, C_1 to C_6 alkylthio, C_1 to C_6

substituted alkylthio, C_1 to C_6 alkylsulfonyl, C_1 to C_6 substituted alkylsulfonyl, C_1 to C_6 alkoxy, C_1 to C_6 substituted alkoxy, phenoxy, substituted phenoxy, amino, (monosubstituted)amino and (disubstituted)amino.

9. The compound of claim 1, wherein R_6 is selected from the group consisting of C_1 to C_6 alkyl, C_1 to C_6 substituted alkyl, C_7 to C_{12} phenylalkyl and C_7 to C_{12} substituted phenylalkyl.

10. The compound of claim 1, wherein R_7 is absent and R_8 together with the attached nitrogen depicted in the above formula form a substituted heterocycle or a substituted cyclic C_3 to C_7 heteroalkylene, wherein at least one of said substitution is the formula -D-E, wherein D is C_1 to C_6 alkylene and E is selected from the group consisting of amino, (monosubstituted)amino and (disubstituted)amino.

11. The compound of claim 1, wherein R_7 is a hydrogen atom and R_8 is the formula X-CH-Y, wherein the attached nitrogen depicted in the above formula is attached to the carbon atom of the formula X-CH-Y, and wherein X is selected from the group consisting of a C_1 to C_6 alkyl, C_1 to C_6 substituted alkyl, C_7 to C_{12} phenylalkyl and C_7 to C_{12} substituted phenylalkyl and Y is the formula $-(CH_2)_m-Z$, wherein m is 1 or 2 and Z is selected from the group consisting of amino, (monosubstituted)amino and (disubstituted)amino.

12. The compound of claim 1, wherein R_1 to R_5 are, independently, selected from the group consisting of a hydrogen atom, halo, hydroxy, protected hydroxy, nitro,

C_1 to C_6 alkyl, C_1 to C_6 substituted alkyl, phenyl, substituted phenyl, C_1 to C_6 alkylthio, C_1 to C_6 substituted alkylthio, C_1 to C_6 alkylsulfonyl, C_1 to C_6 substituted alkylsulfonyl, C_1 to C_6 alkoxy, C_1 to C_6 substituted alkoxy, phenoxy, substituted phenoxy, amino, (monosubstituted)amino and (disubstituted)amino;

R_6 is selected from the group consisting of C_1 to C_6 alkyl, C_1 to C_6 substituted alkyl, C_7 to C_{12} phenylalkyl and C_7 to C_{12} substituted phenylalkyl;

R_7 is absent and R_8 together with the attached nitrogen depicted in the above formula form a substituted heterocycle or a substituted cyclic C_3 to C_7 heteroalkylene, wherein at least one of said substitution is the formula -D-E, wherein D is C_1 to C_6 alkylene and E is selected from the group consisting of amino, (monosubstituted)amino and (disubstituted)amino group; or

R_7 is a hydrogen atom and R_8 is the formula X-CH-Y, wherein the attached nitrogen depicted in the above formula is attached to the carbon atom of the formula X-CH-Y, and wherein X is selected from the group consisting of a C_1 to C_6 alkyl, C_1 to C_6 substituted alkyl, C_7 to C_{12} phenylalkyl and C_7 to C_{12} substituted phenylalkyl and Y is the formula $-(CH_2)_n-Z$, wherein n is 1 to 2 and Z is selected from the group consisting of amino, (monosubstituted)amino and (disubstituted)amino.

13. The compound of claim 1, wherein R_1 to R_5 are selected, independently, from the group consisting of a hydrogen atom, methyl, isopropyl, hydroxy, ethoxy, methoxy, butoxy, phenoxy, chloro, fluoro, bromo, nitro,

trifluoromethyl, phenyl, methylthio, trifluoromethylthio, trifluoromethoxy, methylsulfonyl and dimethylamino.

14. The compound of claim 1, wherein R_2 and R_3 form a phenyl or substituted phenyl that is fused to the phenyl depicted in the above formula.

15. The compound of claim 1, wherein R_6 is selected from the group consisting of a benzyl, 4-(iodophenyl)methyl, 4-(chlorophenyl)methyl, 4-(bromophenyl)methyl, 2-(methoxyphenyl)methyl, 3-(methoxyphenyl)methyl, 4-(ethoxyphenyl)methyl, 4-(propoxyphenyl)methyl, 4-(ethylphenyl)methyl, 4-(isopropylphenyl)methyl, 4-(isobutylphenyl)methyl, 4-(trifluoromethylphenyl)methyl, 3,4-(dimethoxyphenyl)methyl, 4-(t-butylphenyl)methyl, 4-(2-(1-piperidyl)ethoxy)phenylmethyl, 4-((3,3-dimethyl)butoxyphenyl)methyl, 4-((3-methyl)butoxyphenyl)methyl, 4-((2-dimethylamino)ethoxyphenyl)methyl, 2-phenethyl, 2-(4-methoxyphenyl)ethyl, 3-indolylmethyl, 4-(biphenyl)methyl, 1-naphthylmethyl, 2-naphthylmethyl, diphenylmethyl, 3,4-dichlorophenylmethyl and 2-methoxyethyl.

16. The compound of claim 1, wherein R_7 is absent and R_8 together with the nitrogen depicted in the above formula are selected from the group consisting of 3-(aminomethyl)-7-hydroxyisoquinolyl, 3-(aminomethyl)isoquinolyl, 2-(aminomethyl)pyrrolidyl, trans-2-aminomethyl-4-hydroxypyrrolidyl, 4-aminomethylthiazolidin-3-yl and 2-(aminomethyl)piperidyl.

17. The compound of claim 1, wherein R_7 is a hydrogen atom and R_8 is the formula X-CH-Y, wherein Y is aminomethyl and X is selected from the group consisting of 3-guanidinopropyl, 2-aminoethyl, 3-(methylamino)propyl, 4-aminobutyl, hydroxymethyl, 4-nitrophenylmethyl, benzyl, 3-(aminomethyl)phenylmethyl, 4-(aminomethyl)phenylmethyl, 4-hydroxyphenylmethyl, 3-pyridylmethyl, 4-pyridylmethyl, 2-thienylmethyl, butyl, 2-(ethylamino)ethyl, 2-(dimethylamino)ethyl, 3-(dimethylamino)propyl, 4-(dimethylamino)butyl, 1-hydroxyethyl, 2-hydroxyethyl, 3-hydroxypropyl, 1-methylethyl, 1,1-dimethylethyl, methoxymethyl, 2-pyridylmethyl, 2-methylsulfonylethyl, thiomethyl, 2-(methylthio)ethyl, 1-methyl-1-thioethyl, ethyl, 4-(2,2,2-trifluoroethylamino)butyl, aminomethyl, methylaminomethyl, dimethylaminomethyl, ethylaminomethyl, butylaminomethyl, 2,2-dimethylpropylaminoethyl, benzylaminoethyl, 2-phenethylaminomethyl, 3-phenylpropylaminomethyl, cyclohexylmethylaminomethyl, 2-cyclohexylethylaminomethyl, 4-hydroxybutylaminomethyl, 5-hydroxypentylaminomethyl, 2-methoxyaminoethylaminomethyl, 3-methoxypropylaminomethyl, 2-phenoxyethylaminomethyl, 2-(2-methoxy)ethoxyethylaminomethyl, 2-thienylsulfonylamidomethyl, 4-(methoxy)phenylsufonylamidomethyl, phenylsulfonylamidomethyl, 4-(butoxy)phenylsulfonylamidomethyl, methylsulfonylamidomethyl, 3-(4-morpholinyl)propyl, 3-cyclopropylaminopropyl, 3-(tetrahydofurfurylamino)propyl, 3-(4-hydroxypiperidinyl)propyl, 3-(1,1-dimethyl-2-hydroxyethylamino)propyl, 3-(N-(2-hydroxyethyl)methylamino)propyl,

3-(N-(cyclohexyl)methylamino)propyl, 2-(4-morpholinyl)ethyl, 2-cyclopropylaminoethyl, 2-(tetrahydrofurfurylamino)ethyl, 2-(4-hydroxypiperidinyl)ethyl, 2-(1,1-dimethyl-2-hydroxyethylamino)ethyl, 2-(N-(2-hydroxyethyl)methylamino)ethyl, 2-(N-(cyclohexyl)methylamino)ethyl, 4-ethylaminobutyl, 4-(2-methoxyethylamino)butyl, 3-ethylaminopropyl, 3-(2-methoxyethylamino)propyl, 3-pyridylmethylaminomethyl, 3-(methylamino)propyl, 3-aminopropyl, 3-(butylamino)propyl, 3-(2,2-dimethylpropylamino)propyl, 3-(phenylmethylamino)propyl, 3-(2-phenylethylamino)propyl, 3-(3-phenylpropylamino)propyl, 3-(2-cyclohexylethylamino)propyl, 3-(3-pridylmethylamino)propyl, 3-(3-methoxypropylamino)propyl, 3-(4-hydroxybutylamino)propyl, 3-(5-hydroxypentylamino)propyl, 3-(2-phenyoxyethylamino)propyl, 3-(methylamino)propyl, 4-aminobutyl, 4-(butylamino)butyl, 4-(2,2-dimethylpropylamino)butyl, 4-(phenylmethylaminom)butyl, 4-(2-phenylethylamino)butyl, 4-(3-phenylpropylamino)butyl, 4-(cyclohexylmethylamino)butyl, 4-(2-cyclohexylethylamino)butyl, 4-(3-pridylmethylamio)butyl, 4-(3-methoxypropylamino)butyl, 4-(4-hydroxybutylamino)butyl, 4-(5-hydroxypentylamino)butyl, 4-(2-phenyoxyethylamino)butyl and 4-((2-(2-methoxy)ethoxy)ethylamino)butyl.

18. The compound of claim 1, wherein R_1 to R_5 are selected, independently, from the group consisting of a hydrogen atom, methyl, isopropyl, hydroxy, ethoxy, methoxy, butoxy, phenoxy, chloro, fluoro, bromo, nitro, trifluoromethyl, phenyl, methylthio, trifluoromethoxy,

methylsulfonyl and dimethylamino, and wherein R_2 and R_3 form a phenyl that is fused to the phenyl depicted in the above formula;

R_6 is selected from the group consisting of 4-(iodophenyl)methyl, 4-(chlorophenyl)methyl, 4-(bromophenyl)methyl, 2-(methoxyphenyl)methyl, 3-(methoxyphenyl)methyl, 4-(ethoxyphenyl)methyl, 4-(propoxyphenyl)methyl, 4-(ethylphenyl)methyl, 4-(isopropylphenyl)methyl, 4-(trifluoromethylphenyl)methyl, 3,4-(dimethoxyphenyl)methyl, 4-(t-butylphenyl)methyl, 4-(2-(1-piperidyl)ethoxy)phenylmethyl, 4-((3,3-dimethyl)butoxyphenyl)methyl, 4-((3-methyl)butoxyphenyl)methyl, 4-((2-dimethylamino)ethoxyphenyl)methyl, 2-phenethyl, 2-(4-methoxyphenyl)ethyl, 3-indolylmethyl, 4-(biphenyl)methyl, 1-naphthylmethyl, 2-naphthylmethyl, diphenylmethyl, 3,4-dichlorophenylmethyl and 2-methoxyethyl; and

R_7 is absent and R_8 together with the nitrogen depicted in the above formula are selected from the group consisting of 3-(aminomethyl)-7-hydroxyisoquinolyl, 3-(aminomethyl)isoquinolyl, 2-(aminomethyl)pyrrolidyl, trans-2-aminomethyl-4-hydroxypyrrolidyl, 4-aminomethylthiazolidin-3-yl and 2-(aminomethyl)piperidyl; or

R_7 is a hydrogen atom and R_8 is the formula X-CH-Y, wherein Y is aminomethyl and X is selected from the group consisting of 3-guanidinopropyl, 2-aminoethyl, 3-(methylamino)propyl, 4-aminobutyl, hydroxymethyl,

4-nitrophenylmethyl, benzyl, 3-(aminomethyl)phenylmethyl, 4-(aminomethyl)phenylmethyl, 4-hydroxyphenylmethyl, 3-pyridylmethyl, 4-pyridylmethyl, 2-thienylmethyl, butyl, 2-(ethylamino)ethyl, 2-(dimethylamino)ethyl, 3-(dimethylamino)propyl, 4-(dimethylamino)butyl, 1-hydroxyethyl, 2-hydroxyethyl, 3-hydroxypropyl, 1-methylethyl, 1,1-dimethylethyl, methoxymethyl, 2-pyridylmethyl, 2-methylsulfonylethyl, thiomethyl, 2-(methylthio)ethyl, 1-methyl-1-thioethyl, ethyl, 4-(2,2,2-trifluoroethylamino)butyl, aminomethyl, methylaminomethyl, dimethylaminomethyl, ethylaminomethyl, butylaminomethyl, 2,2-dimethylpropylaminoethyl, benzylaminoethyl, 2-phenethylaminomethyl, 3-phenylpropylaminomethyl, cyclohexylmethylaminomethyl, 2-cyclohexylethylaminomethyl, 4-hydroxybutylaminomethyl, 5-hydroxypentylaminomethyl, 2-methoxyaminoethylaminomethyl, 3-methoxypropylaminomethyl, 2-phenoxyethylaminomethyl, 2-(2-methoxy)ethoxyethylaminomethyl, 2-thienylsulfonylaminomethyl, 4-(methoxy)phenylsufonylaminomethyl, phenylsulfonylaminomethyl, 4-(butoxy)phenylsulfonylaminomethyl, methylsulfonylaminomethyl, 3-(4-morpholinyl)propyl, 3-cyclopropylaminopropyl, 3-(tetrahydofurfurylamino)propyl, 3-(4-hydroxypiperidinyl)propyl, 3-(1,1-dimethyl-2-hydroxyethylamino)propyl, 3-(N-(2-hydroxyethyl)methylamino)propyl, 3-(N-(cyclohexyl)methylamino)propyl, 2-(4-morpholinyl)ethyl, 2-cyclopropylaminoethyl, 2-(tetrahydrofurfurylamino)ethyl, 2-(4-hydroxypiperidinyl)ethyl,

2-(1,1-dimethyl-2-hydroxyethylamino)ethyl, 2-(N-(2-hydroxyethyl)methylamino)ethyl, 2-(N-(cyclohexyl)methylamino)ethyl, 4-ethylaminobutyl, 4-(2-methoxyethylamino)butyl, 3-ethylaminopropyl, 3-(2-methoxyethylamino)propyl, 3-pyridylmethylaminomethyl, 3-(methylamino)propyl, 3-aminopropyl, 3-(butylamino)propyl, 3-(2,2-dimethylpropylamino)propyl, 3-(phenylmethylamino)propyl, 3-(2-phenylethylamino)propyl, 3-(3-phenylpropylamino)propyl, 3-(2-cyclohexylethylamino)propyl, 3-(3-pridylmethylamino)propyl, 3-(3-methoxypropylamino)propyl, 3-(4-hydroxybutylamino)propyl, 3-(5-hydroxypentylamino)propyl, 3-(2-phenyoxyethylamino)propyl, 3-(methylamino)propyl, 4-aminobutyl, 4-(butylamino)butyl, 4-(2,2-dimethylpropylamino)butyl, 4-(phenylmethylaminom)butyl, 4-(2-phenylethylamino)butyl, 4-(3-phenylpropylamino)butyl, 4-(cyclohexylmethylamino)butyl, 4-(2-cyclohexylethylamino)butyl, 4-(3-pridylmethylamio)butyl, 4-(3-methoxypropylamino)butyl, 4-(4-hydroxybutylamino)butyl, 4-(5-hydroxypentylamino)butyl, 4-(2-phenyoxyethylamino)butyl and 4-((2-(2-methoxy)ethoxy)ethylamino)butyl.

19. The compound of claim 1, wherein:

the depicted ring is phenyl;

n is 1;

R_1, R_2, R_4, and R_5, are each a hydrogen atom;

R_3 is selected from the group consisting of chloro, fluoro

and bromo;

R_6 is selected from the group consisting of (4-ethoxyphenyl)methyl, (4-propoxyphenyl)methyl, (4-t-butylphenyl)methyl, (4-iodophenyl)methyl and (4-phenylphenyl)methyl;

R_7 is a hydrogen atom or absent;

when R_7 is a hydrogen atom, R_8 is the formula X-CH-Y, wherein Y is aminomethyl and X is selected from the group consisting of 2-hydroxyethyl, 2-(ethylamino)ethyl, 2-(cyclopropylamino)propyl, 2-(3-methoxypropylamino)propyl, 2-(4-hydroxypiperidin-1-yl)propyl, 2-(2-hydroxy-1,1-dimethylethylamino)propyl, 3-aminopropyl, 2-(methylsulfonyl)ethyl, 2-aminoethyl, 2-(4-hydroxypiperidin-1-yl)ethyl, 2-(2-hydroxy-1,1-dimethylethylamino)ethyl, 2-(tetrahydrofurfurylamino)propyl, 3-(3-methoxypropylamino)propyl, 2-((2-hydroxyethyl)methylamino)ethyl, 3-hydroxypropyl, 3-(methylamino)propyl, 3-(ethylamino)propyl, 3-(butylamino)propyl, 3-(2,2,-dimethylpropylamino)propyl, 3-(cyclohexylmethylamino)propyl, 3-(3-pyridylmethylamino)propyl, 3-(2-methoxyethylamino)propyl, 3-(3-methoxypropylamino)propyl, 3-(4-hydroxybutylamino)propyl, 3-(5-hydroxypentylamino)propyl, 3-dimethylaminopropyl, (3-aminomethyl)phenylmethyl, 3-(2-phenoxyethylamino)propyl, 4-(ethylamino)butyl, 4-(2-methoxyethylamino)butyl,

4-(3-methoxypropylamino)butyl, 4-(4-hydroxybutylamino)butyl, 4-(5-hydroxypentylamino)butyl, 4-((2-(2-methoxy)ethoxy)ethylamino)butyl, 3-guanidinopropyl, 4-guanidinobutyl, hydroxymethyl and 2-dimethylaminoethyl;

and, when R_7 is absent, R_8 is trans-2-aminomethyl-4-hydroxypyrrolidyl.

20. A method of altering the activity of a melanocortin receptor in a subject, comprising administering to the subject an effective amount of the compound of claim 1.

21. The method of claim 20, wherein said activity is increased.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein said melanocortin receptor is MC-1.

23. The method of claim 21, wherein said melanocortin receptor is MC-3.

24. The method of claim 21, wherein said melanocortin receptor is MC-4.

25. The method of claim 21, wherein said melanocortin receptor is MC-5.

26. The method of claim 20, wherein said activity is decreased.

27. The method of claim 26, wherein said melanocortin receptor is MC-1.

28. The method of claim 26, wherein said melanocortin receptor is MC-3.

29. The method of claim 26, wherein said melanocortin receptor is MC-4.

30. The method of claim 26, wherein said melanocortin receptor is MC-5.

31. A method of treating erectile dysfunction in a subject, comprising administering to the subject an effective amount of the compound of claim 1.

32. A method of treating sexual dysfunction in a subject, comprising administering to the subject an effective amount of the compound of claim 1.

33. A method of treating obesity in a subject, comprising administering to the subject an effective amount of the compound of claim 1.

34. A method of treating an eating disorder in a subject, comprising administering to the subject an effective amount of the compound of claim 1.

35. A method of treating diabetes in a subject, comprising administering to the subject an effective amount of the compound of claim 1.

36. A method of treating syndrome X in a subject, comprising administering to the subject an effective amount of the compound of claim 1.

37. A method of treating inflammation in a subject, comprising administering to the subject an effective amount of the compound of claim 1.

38. A method of treating obesity in a subject, comprising administering to the subject an effective amount of the compound of claim 18.

39. A method of treating diabetes in a subject, comprising administering to the subject an effective amount of the compound of claim 19.

40. A method of treating syndrome X in a subject, comprising administering to the subject an effective amount of the compound of claim 19.

41. A method of treating obesity in a subject, comprising administering to the subject an effective amount of the compound of claim 19.

42. A composition comprising the compound of claim 1 and a second compound selected from the group consisting of an insulin sensitizer, insulin mimetic, sulfonylurea, α-glucosidase inhibitor, HMG-CoA reductase inhibitor, sequestrant cholesterol lowering agent, β3 adrenergic receptor agonist, neuropeptide Y antagonist, phosphodiester V inhibitor and α-2 adrenergic receptor antagonist.

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